

Exhibit No. 1
Date 1-28-2011
Bill No. SB 188

January 28, 2011

Commissioner Murray,

In reviewing SB188 I have several concerns that I feel we, as counties, should voice.

- 1) First and foremost is that the Montana Land Information Act (MLIA) was successful due to support of the counties. We supported it as a way to generate funding for those counties that did not have the ability to generate GIS capabilities on their own. We envisioned it being a statewide program that would foster GIS across the state at the local level. Sadly, this has never really happened.
- 2) The counties are the folks who collect and process the funds from our citizens. The State to date has simply taken what we collect and used it for their priorities. Had the counties known at the onset that they would have no authority over the actual distribution of funds other than advisory, I am not sure it would have succeeded in the first place.
- 3) Transferring the MLIA responsibilities to the more broadly focused Information Technology Advisory Council will, in effect, remove what little voice we as counties have had in the distribution of grant funds. Simply put, the State Department of Administration will have little in the way of checks and balances when determining how the funds are distributed.

As proposed this new council will have several areas of advisory oversight including GIS and E-Government. I question how much attention will be given to the MLIA program and associated funds if they have numerous other areas that may be higher priority. I suspect that the management of the grant process and fund distribution will be delegated to the Department of Administration.

While the current MLIA council is also only advisory in nature, we have been able to somewhat mitigate attempts to remove the grant process from the act. I am convinced that the amount of grant monies available to local government will be dramatically reduced (or eliminated) if the current council is eliminated.

Truthfully, I still think we would be better served to either repeal the act completely or modify it to make the split 50/50 and let the State do with their share as they will. Given the tough nature of our economy today I am somewhat hesitant to give up a funding source (even one that leaves a sour taste in my mouth).

Ok, much more than a paragraph, but I hope I made some sense here. Let me know if you want to visit about this further.

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